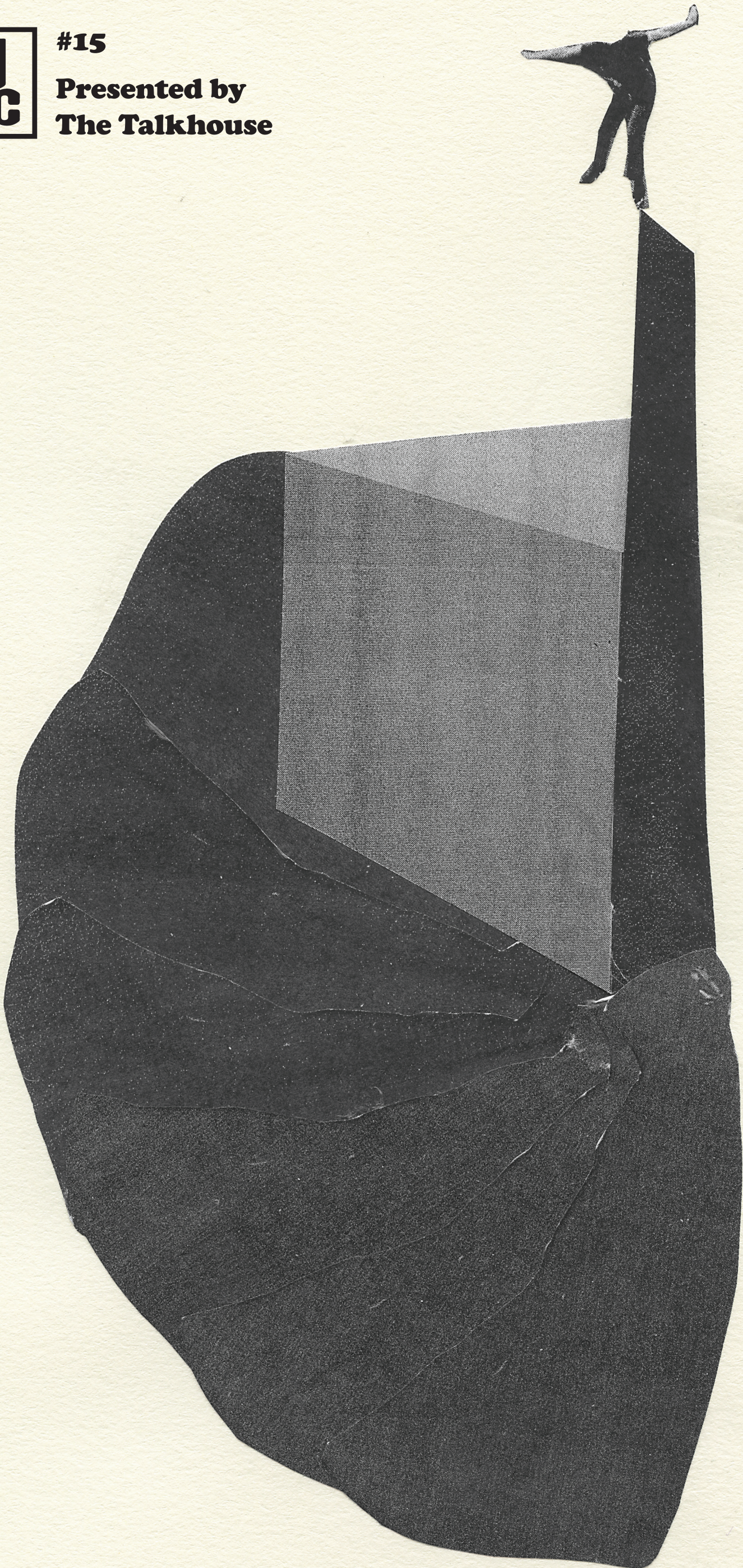




**#15**

**Presented by  
The Talkhouse**





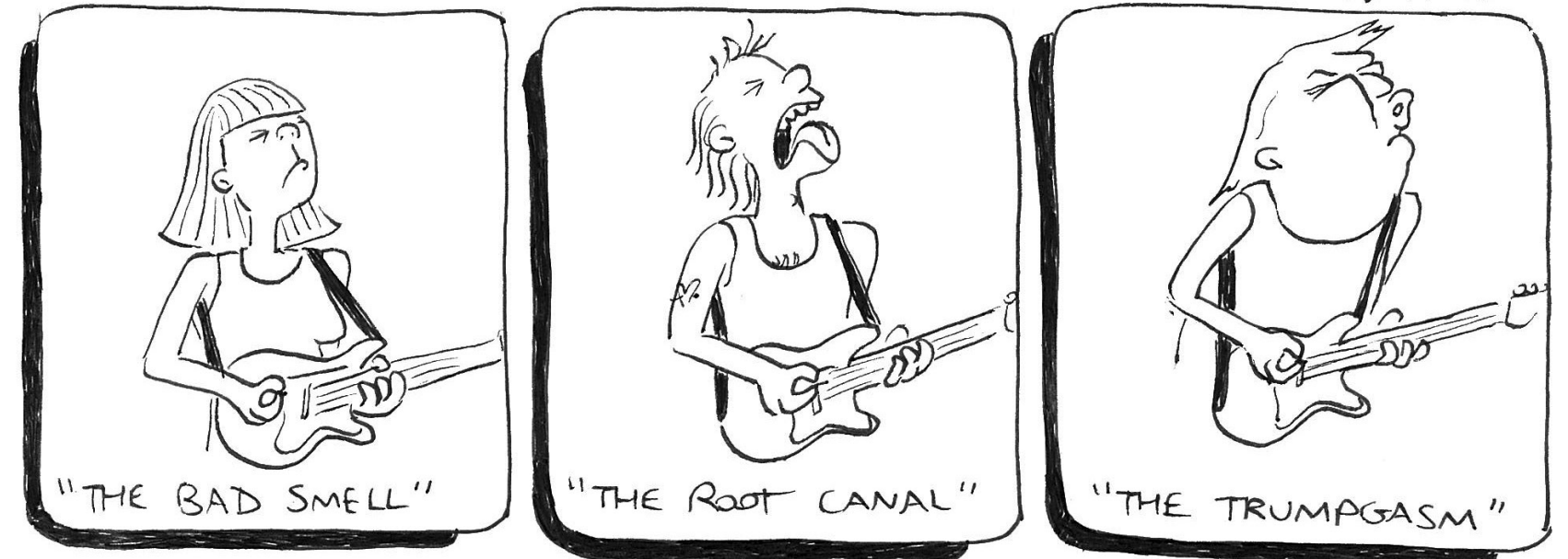
## Letter From the Editors

In the late '90s, musicologist Christopher Small coined the term “musicking”: “music,” construed as a verb. It’s a concept that describes music, not merely in terms of sound, but as the sum of the human relationships it occasions: between players on a stage, between musicians and audience members, between the audience members themselves. Whether we’re listening to somebody pour her heart out on record or performing our own songs for a sea full of strangers, music is an inherently social activity—one that involves a sharing of expression and experience. Here at AdHoc, we “music” all the time, fostering exchange between artists, fans, and other scene players at our shows and outside of them, including with the zine you’re holding in your hands right now.

For AdHoc Issue 15, we teamed up with fellow Brooklyn-based publication The Talkhouse—a platform that shares our conviction in artist-artist and artist-fan exchange—and asked some of our favorite artists to zoom in on the aspect of music that seems to involve the most “musicking”: the live experience. Body/Head’s Bill Nace and Ben Greenberg of Uniform chat about improvisation, and legendary minimalist composer Rhys Chatham and Tredici Bacci’s Simon Hanes discuss composition—only to reveal that the one really isn’t that different from the other. The Thermals’ Hutch Harris and Springtime Carnivore mastermind Greta Morgan write about some of the joys and challenges of being on tour, while Man Man’s Honus Honus gives us some sage advice on how to enjoy your next Saturday night out without acting like an asshole. Along the way, they reveal how “musicking” with others makes for a continuing source of inspiration. Nace, who also made this issue’s cover art, puts it best: “It’s just about hitting the stage and being open to what’s happening.”

## KNOW YOUR GUITAR LOOK! MIX & MATCH!

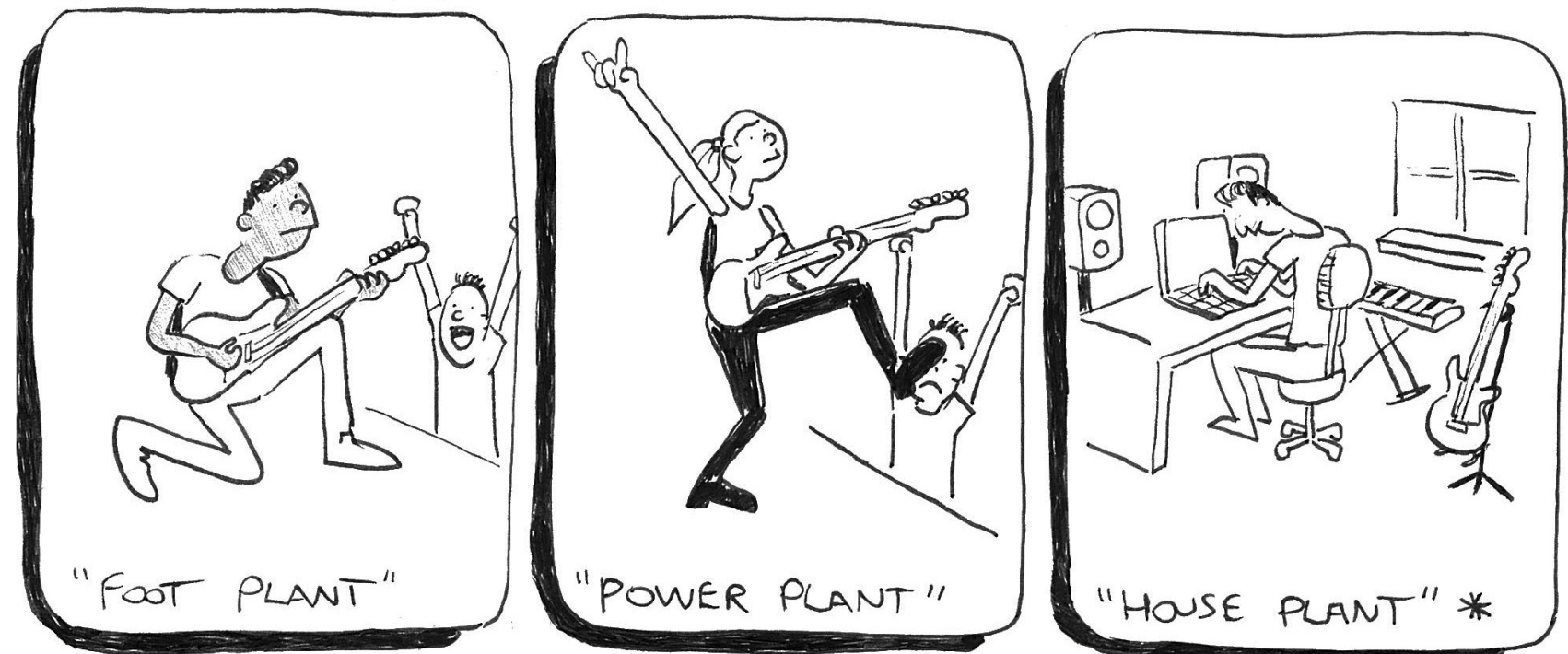
### SHREDDING FACE OPTIONS:



### GUITAR STRAP HEIGHT OPTIONS:



### POSTURE OPTIONS:



TOMMY SIEGEL  
(JUKEBOX THE GHOST/NARC TWAIN)

\* REALIZING THAT SHREDDING HAS NO PLACE IN THE MODERN MUSIC ECONOMY AND YOU’LL BE RECORDING AD JINGLES FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.



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**Tommy Siegel** is a Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter-guitarist-bassist-producer in Jukebox the Ghost, Narc Twain, and Drunken Sufis. He made the cartoon that appears in this issue.

**Ben Greenberg** plays in the band Uniform and solo under the name Hubble, in addition to producing, engineering, and mixing records at the studio Strange Weather in Brooklyn. For this issue, he interviewed Body/Head’s Bill Nace.

**Bill Nace** is a guitarist, visual artist, and label owner who splits his time between Western Massachusetts and Los Angeles. He made the collage that appears on the cover of this issue.

**Ryan Kattner**, aka Honus Honus, is a musician-songwriter, film/theater score composer, screenwriter, and mustachioed multi-hyphenate living in Los Angeles; he has fronted the bands Man Man and Mister Heavenly, and is releasing his first solo album this year. In this issue, he educates readers in proper concert etiquette.

**Hutch Harris** founded and is the lead singer/songwriter of Portland post-pop-punk band the Thermals. For this issue, he whipped up a list of essentials for touring bands.

**Simon Hanes** leads Tredici Bacci, a 14-piece ensemble that plays original compositions inspired by the grand tradition of Italian film music from the '60s and '70s; their new album, *Amore Per Tutti*, is out November 11 on NNA Tapes. For this issue, Simon interviewed Rhys Chatham.

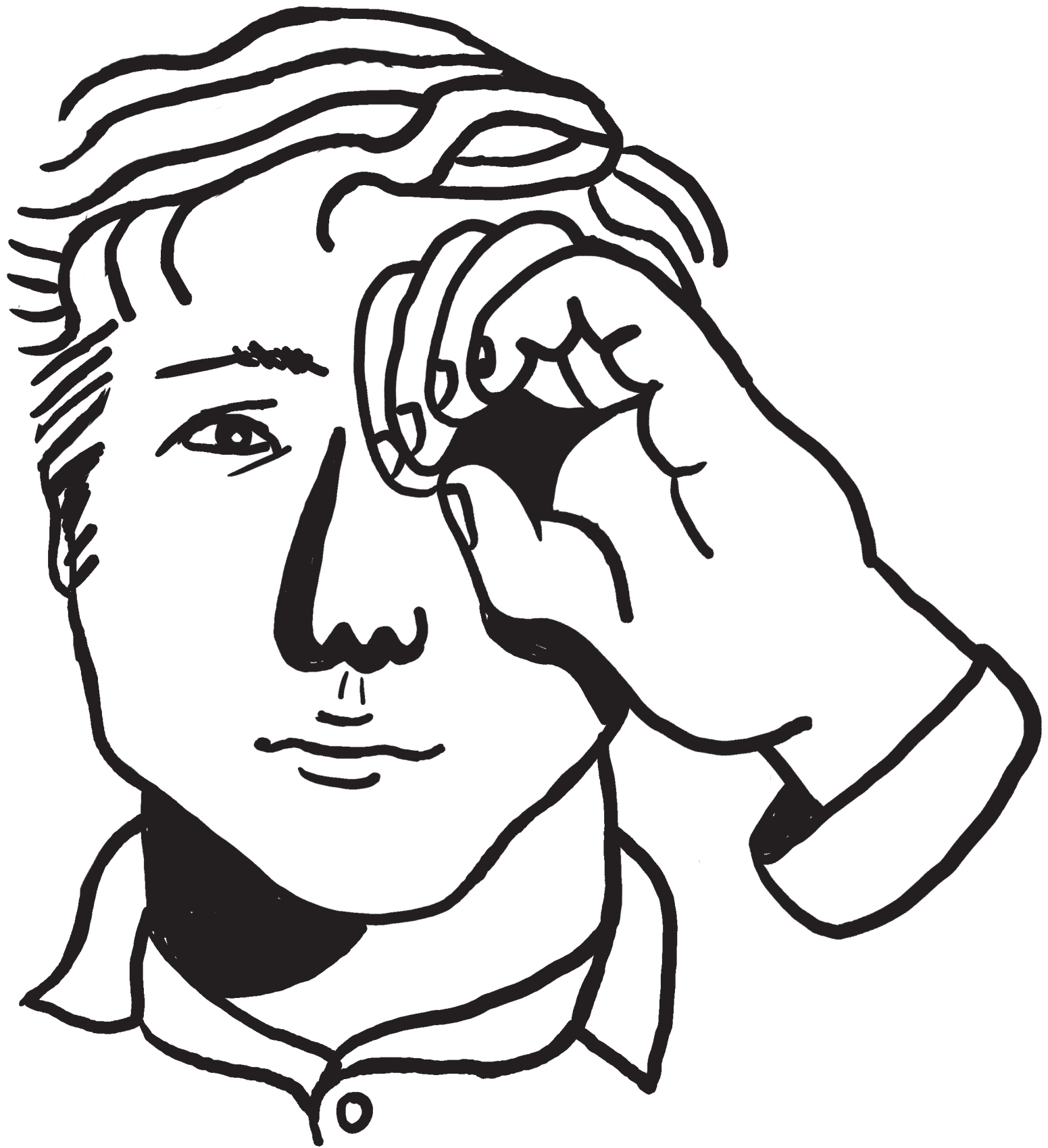
**Greta Morgan** is a singer-songwriter who has performed with the Hush Sound, Gold Motel, and Springtime Carnival. For this issue, she wrote about how summer camp prepared her for living on the road.

**Leesh Adamerovich** is a Brooklyn-based illustrator who enjoys collaborating with musicians. Her work is influenced by '70s music, animation, and quiet moments, and she drew the illustrations in this issue.



# Bill Nace Just Rips

The Body/Head guitarist explains improvisation: “You’re always bound to something when you’re playing.”



**Bill Nace is something of an enigma. A fantastic guitarist, improviser, and visual artist, the Western Massachusetts and Los Angeles-based musician seems to have pulled off the rarest of hat tricks: achieving global notoriety in and beyond his field while making some of the most difficult and challenging music around. The guy doesn’t even have a Wikipedia page, but he’s spent the last decade touring basements and festivals around the globe, helming a prolific record label called Open Mouth Records, making countless collages and drawings, and collaborating with some of the biggest heads in the free music game, including Yoko Ono, Chris Corsano, Paul Flaherty, Thurston Moore, and, more recently, his Body/Head accomplice Kim Gordon. And he’s done it all without gimmicks, shameless self-promotion, or really any shtick whatsoever.**

***No Waves*, the new Body/Head LP, is out this November on Matador Records. The record was edited out of a live set they played at Big Ears Festival in Tennessee a few years ago; each of the album’s three tracks is longer than the last, with the LP culminating in the epic, 23-minute “Abstract/Actress.” Throughout, we hear their guitars running, jumping, dodging, and weaving around each other; the musicians stay on an uncomfortable texture just a little longer than you’d like, and then flip the whole thing on its head. According to Bill, he and Kim never talk about what they’re going to play before a set; they just go out and rip. And that’s the secret of Bill’s enigma: the guy just RIPS. All the time. In his damn sleep. He’s really nice, too.**

**We spoke on the phone the other day about improvisation, running an independent label, and the challenges and unforeseen upsides of bringing free and improvised music to a mainstream audience.**

**When did you start playing free music?**

I was in some bands in high school and in my early twenties that were a bit more of a traditional band configuration: two guitars, bass, drums. I played bass in all of those. But those bands had an element of improvisation involved, whether it was a process used to generate ideas for parts for songs or [meant] to stand on its own. So the transition was pretty natural. I had always gravitated toward those parts anyway, so it was just kind of focusing more on that aspect of it. I’d say that I was around 23, 24, when I really started to work explicitly with improvising and trying to figure out what that was for me.

**How long have you been doing your label?**

I’d have to look at the dates, but I wanna say 10 or 12 years. The first few years was just cassettes, but it’s mostly just vinyl now. And one CD.

**Why the switch to vinyl?**

You know, I had wanted to do vinyl for so long. Up until now, it’s all just been stuff from Western Mass—stuff from there or stuff that I was involved in. And there’s this guy around here, Diagram A, who’d just been doing stuff for years—a bunch of tracks, but never any records, so that was the first record I put out. I was like, “No one else is gonna do this, so I just gotta do this.” And that’s kinda where it started. The label kinda pays for itself, pays for the next release.

**This idea of putting stuff out because you figured that nobody else was going to do it—I feel like in the freak scene at large, so many labels start that way.**

Yeah, well I think that was a reflection of what kinda scene it was. There was just all this great stuff happening here, some of which just wasn’t really documented at all—so it came outta that. And just wanting to do it myself and not have to wait on other people, or whatever shit you have to go through when you have other people put your stuff out.

**It also allows you to reach different audiences. The people who seek out stuff from smaller labels are generally looking for something different out of music than people who just sorta read the internet all day.**

You know, I’m not really online a lot. The way music’s listened to now is so different; I’m not really deep in there, so I don’t even know how people choose that stuff, or listen to stuff.

**The world of improvised music has often been at a remove from the rest of that cultural machine.**

Right. Well, [the music I put out is] also not something that works in, like, a mix, or streaming on Spotify. Maybe it does, but I can imagine a 55-minute track coming up, and [people being] like, “Oh, just skip it.”

Yeah, Matador sent me a download of the new Body/Head, and track three is like, 23 minutes or something. It’s just a different form, but I think there are people who are looking for that still. And there’s definitely a bunch of people on the internet who are writing about it. In a way, I feel like a lot of less accessible music has been able to get more ears, just because of [platforms] like YouTube.

I’m sure that’s totally true, but I will say that on the ground, [as far as] who is going to the shows—it still feels kinda the same to me.

**I feel like sometimes it can be hard to find out about what’s going on in the larger free music scene, or like, the non-institutional free music scene. Cause I feel like some people come to free music specifically through jazz. I did, for sure; I have a background in jazz and a background in punk rock and stuff, and those were always kind of two separate forces in my life.**

I mean, it all comes in waves, but I feel like there [was a time] when things were a little more interesting—like, you’d go to a show and they’d have some kind of free jazz-ish thing and then a noise thing. I feel like now, everything’s so compartmentalized. I mean, I see how it happens—but it’s a little less interesting.

**Yeah, there was a very specific time 10-ish years ago where it was exciting that all these different things could co-exist without needing division for people to understand them—where people could all just be like, “Yeah, this is our spirit music.”**

Yeah, and you see how similar it can be—how absolutely different they are, and yet they’re all kind of existing peacefully with each other.

**I think the Body/Head stuff in particular stands out as being representative of that feeling. I listen to it and it feels like really abstracted blues or... I mean, obviously it’s free music, but it doesn’t fall in any preset categories.**

I mean, it’s a little impossible for me to comment on it. But it does feel a little like “not-genre” music, which I think some people really like about it, and some people hate. When you called, I had just accidentally read some YouTube comment, and I was like, “Oh, I forgot how brutal that is.” A bunch of them actually got really personal against me or Kim. I think some people can hear all these signifiers and be like, “Cool.” And then other people—there’s maybe something a little more rock-oriented, and they’re like, “Why isn’t there bass and drums with this? Why doesn’t it look more like what this element should look like?” Because if you come at it that way, then yeah, it makes no fucking sense.

**They’re like, “She’s singing—why isn’t the guitar making sense to me yet?” Or, “I hear a harmonica—how come there isn’t a beat?”**

Right. Or Kim’s doing the downstroke thing, so why doesn’t it just sound like the shittiest version of [1990 Sonic Youth track] “Kool Thing” I’ve ever heard? Obviously, that’s not even close to what it’s supposed to be. People see something that is connected to something else in their mind, and there’s a disconnect there.

**One of the obvious elephants in the room is that you’re doing this very distinctive, challenging, seemingly very personal music, but you have this built-in audience—this pretty gigantic group of people who maybe should have some point of entry because of how they know about it in the first place, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that they do. It’s interesting to see something that should probably fall into a smaller category of visibility just happen to exist in a much larger one.**

I will say that I lived here [in Western Mass] the first year that Kim lived here, and [she] became kind of like a second family. And then when Kim and I started playing, it was like, “Holy shit.” I’d forgotten who she is, how she is seen in the world. But I have to say, there’s been no one yelling out fucking Sonic Youth songs. From what I’ve picked up on, everyone from the start has been totally open to it.

**I remember you said that you and Kim don’t really talk about what you’re going to play. I know some improvisers will sort of keep “goal posts” in their mind—like, “Okay, I’ll do this for a while, and then once we’ve built to this kind of texture, I’ll change it up.” Are you generally flying totally free?**

Ha. Usually flying free, I guess, though I think that phrase has a bit of a romanticized element to it. You’re always bound to something when you’re playing, even if it’s just the notion of “making music.” So, yeah: free-ish. We usually don’t talk about it, but not as a point of principle; it’s just how it’s happened. Kim and I occasionally will have a way we want to start a set, and we’ll discuss that, but it’s pretty loose—just kind of a signpost—and it’s meant to fall away pretty quickly.

I have a duo with Jake Meginsky where we improvise. Recently, those improvisations have been turning into pieces that are planned out, with set parts. So in that case, there’s a lot of discussion about what’s working and what’s not, as a way to discover more elements to bring into the final piece, or push it along to its best iteration.

Most of the other groupings I improvise in, it’s just about hitting the stage and being open to what’s happening. But I think when you’re talking about music with people you play with—and editing records with them, listening to music with them—you can learn a lot from that. And then you can take a lot of that into a playing situation.

**How would you describe the way you and Kim improvise together? Does it feel like there’s a foreground and a background, where one of you is the support and the other is leading?**

I think we switch between all of that: equal footing, like one big sound. Or it will be one of us framing the other, or taking the lead. It’s always kind of swirling in and out of that, which allows for a lot of different combinations, and space to really explore and push a theme.

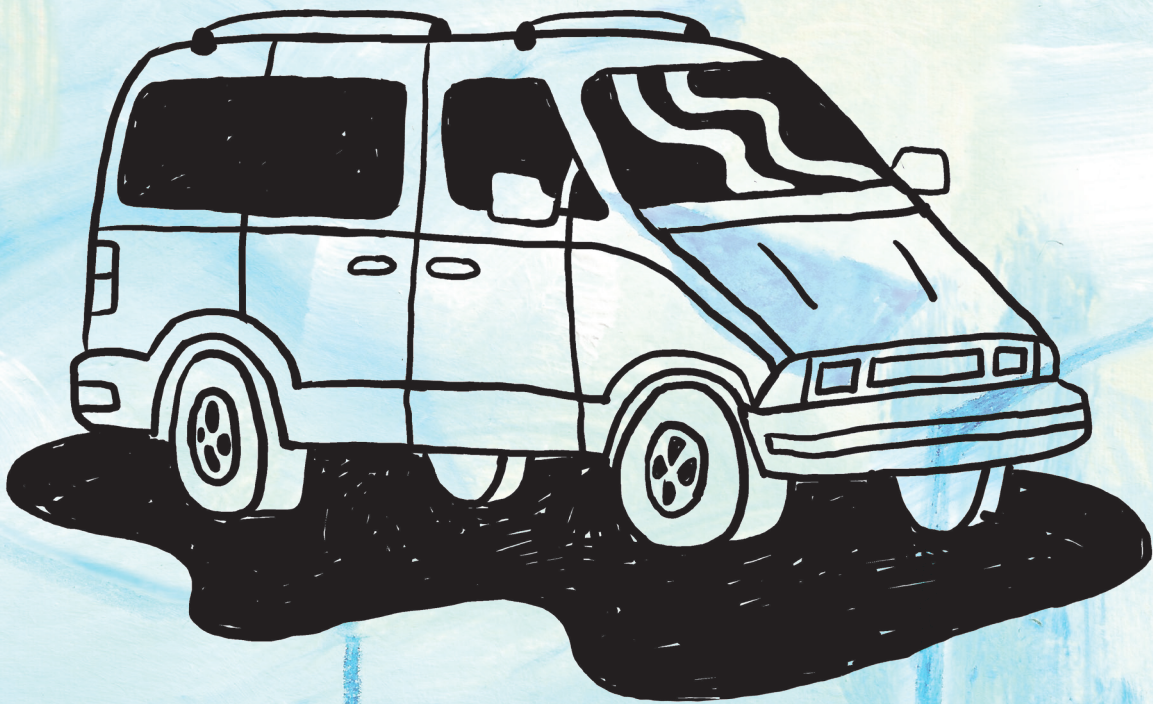
**Does having lyrics and vocals involved change that at all? Are you ever cue-ing off of the vocals?**

Yes! With Kim, the vocals are a huge part of it. I love playing with the vocals. Kim’s voice can really move around in terms of tone, so I really want to support it wherever it goes. 🗣️



Dude, Be Cool

Man Man’s Honus Honus shares his very best concert etiquette.



So, you’ve had a few drinks. Maybe a few more after that. Like a sleeping, tentacled Elder One stirring beneath the depths of the unknown, the allure of the backstage whispers your name. You are fully aware that this is a no-fly zone for non-band members, but the security guard isn’t paying attention. Now is your chance, mere mortal.

**Fantasy:** You stealthily approach and slip past him like a shadow on the wall.

**Reality:** You are a stumbling, ungraceful, sloppy mess. Security grabs your shoulder. The night has taken a turn and you are tossed. On. Your. Ass.

**Shows are fun. Security, not so much. Here’s a list, in no particular order, of etiquette “no-no’s” that I have learned during my tenure in the indie rock “biz.”**

<p><b>Don’t be an a-hole show-goer</b></p> <p>Working security at a music show is a thankless job. One of those “no one likes having you around except for when they need you” kind of jobs that is primarily there to make sure no one hurts themselves or hurts others or inspires others to hurt themselves or others. Security guards constantly have to deal with the worst version of drunken Party You there is, and unless the security person is a real creeper out to inflict bully tactics on the surrounding world—and there are many variations of this particular archetype—they’re usually just another (big) human grinding away at life, earning a paycheck like everyone else. They don’t deserve your liquid courage wrath or alcoholic bravado.</p> <p>Simple, obvious talk: whatever energy you exert is what you get in return. Be a butthead; be treated like one. Pick a fight; be prepared to get served your teeth. And possibly arrested. Or fed to Cthulhu.</p>
<p><b>Don’t be a security goon</b></p> <p>Now, I’ve seen extremely cool security at many a show (Union Transfer in Philly—much love), and I’ve seen the opposite. The way security chooses to act is usually defined/dictated by the venue that employs them—whatever vibe they decide to project. Some security are off-duty cops (not bad guys, but wise to avoid if you love bringing attitude). Some are guys/gals trying to work out their inner demons by destroying teeny indie-boppers’ nights. Most couldn’t give a rat’s ass about you if you just behave respectfully toward everyone else. “Respect” is the key word here. Respect each other, and all will be most chill.</p> <p>It always warms the cockles of my bitter heart whenever I see a large, scary-looking security guard gently lift a much smaller indie rocker up and over a barrier separating the stage from the audience and then set them on their way to scurry off back into the audience, where they’ll most likely rinse, repeat, and try again. The delicate ballet of crowd-surfer and security muscle, when done right, is a real beauty to behold.</p> <p>But what if this activity of riding the wave of sweaty bodies is not allowed at the venue? And there are clear signs indicating this? Doesn’t this give security every right to over-aggressively remove a crowd-surfer? Grab them by the scruff of their neck, throw them onto the ground, and make an example of them for everyone else to see? I don’t think so, but if that’s the directive from above their pay grade, what can you do? If you’re the surfer and you got your warning, be cool; give it a rest. You’re there for the music anyway, right?</p> <p>Overly aggressive security guys looking for trouble by inciting trouble are the worst, but, fortunately for us all, few and far between. The only time I’ve ever stopped a show I was playing (and the whole band walked off stage) was when we saw a security guard who was standing side-stage violently toss a girl onto the street out a side door. There’s no reason for that, no matter the circumstances. It’s a fucking rock show, not a war zone.</p>
<p><b>Don’t put up a fight</b></p> <p>Especially if you’re wasted. This situation will never work out in your favor. Sure, a softer approach by security can prevent a fight, but you can’t always bank on this. If your friend is out of hand, be the peacekeeper—defuse the situation. Also, if you get thrown out of a venue, don’t waste your breath trying to talk your way back in. It rarely, if ever, will happen, and you’re just making the situation worse. You have to remember that security is stone-sober (or supposed to be) and you most likely are not. While they’ve spent the entire evening observing your fellow concert-goers and anticipating any problems, you’ve been all crab at the booty.</p> <p>Whatever you do, play nice with the people who are trying to keep you safe. You never know: that swole security guard may be your dance partner later in the night. Or the beefy savior who pulls you safely from the maelstrom of the pit so you can live to thrash another day. Crab if you need it. 🐞</p>

Hutch Harris’ Tools for Touring

The Thermals frontman offers up a starter kit for touring bands.

**I’ve been touring in rock bands for more than 20 years. Like with any profession, possessing the proper tools and knowing how to use them is the key to doing a good job. Below, I have compiled a list of means and machines that are crucial, not only to surviving touring, but to doing it well. Some can be purchased in a store; others come from within. (NB: This short guide is for touring the United States.)**

**A Van**  
Obviously, you will need a vehicle to haul your gear and your band around the country. It doesn’t need to be huge. My bandmate Kathy Foster and I once toured for more than a month in my 1993 Toyota Corolla, but it was only the two of us, and we had a minimal setup. If there are three to four people in your band, you could tour in a van as small as a Ford Aerostar. Personally, I have mostly toured in full-sized—12-passenger or larger—vans.

These days, my band the Thermals usually rents a Sprinter van from Bandago when we do national tours. But for shorter trips, and for most of our career, we’ve toured in a 2002 Chevy Express Van. We bought it from a Portland dealer that re-sells rental vans once they’ve cleared 60,000 miles. We removed the two back benches, and our [former] drummer Lorin Coleman installed a sturdy loft that can hold gear and merch above and below.

If your band only tours every few years—or if you’re just going to play shows from San Francisco to San Diego and then break up—you can probably just rent a van or borrow one from a friend’s band. But if you’re in it for the long haul, and I hope you are, I would recommend buying a van. Pool your money and do your research. Get something used—around 10 years old—but sturdy. Build a loft to hide and protect your gear from theft—and to protect yourself from your gear in the event of a collision. Change your oil every 3,000 miles, and wear your damn seatbelt.

**Patience**  
Although most days you will be traveling at 65 miles per hour or faster, nothing really happens quickly on tour. The United States is a very large country. Too large, in my opinion. I say if a state wants to secede, let them secede already! I propose that Washington, Oregon, and California all secede and form one super-chill country with a mostly weed-based economy.

Anyway, unless you’re on the East Coast, most drives between major cities will be six to eight hours—at least. If you ever do get to the venue early, you will be alone. Promoters, sound engineers, and local bands do not show up early, and many make it a point of pride to be late. So drive safely, take your time, and be patient.

Patience is not something that comes naturally to me. Ask anyone who has ever toured with the Thermals; it has taken me years of practice to attain even a modicum of patience. These days, I stay composed by staying occupied. Reading, writing, and sleeping are my three favorite ways to pass the time.

**Instruments**  
Of course, you will have your instruments with you. A few quick tips, though: keep the smaller pieces of gear—guitars, snare drums, cymbals—with you whenever you can. Tour can be treacherous! Many bands have had their vans and instruments stolen, mine included—even in their own towns. Anything you leave in the van overnight may not be there in the morning. If you can carry it with one hand, I would advise bringing it with you wherever you sleep, be it the fanciest hotel or the dirtiest punk house.

**Bandmates**  
You can have the newest van and the sweetest gear. You can be selling out shows across the country. You can be on top of the world. But if you don’t like the people who are with you there, you’ll wish you were anywhere else.

Green Day’s Mike Dirnt said it best in an interview with Guitar Center: “I would say, first of all, play music with friends. Don’t just play with somebody because they happen to have a lot of skills. Play with people you get along with because happiness is a road traveled, not a destination.”

You may be cringing if this sounds a little too greeting-card-inspirational to your ears, but it’s absolutely true. Being on tour means being with your band 24 hours per day. The only privacy you’ll have is when you are asleep, and even then, your bandmates may show up in your dreams, as mine sometimes do. Playing with people you not only get along with but are also true friends with is crucial for getting through tour, and having a great time while doing it.

**Phones**  
What did we bring on tour before we had tiny computers in our pockets? We brought books, magazines, CDs, cassettes, and video games. We still do all the same things we used to do, like read, listen to music, and play games; we just use one device to do them all, as well as text our girlfriends and boyfriends and call our parents. There’s actually a lot more space in the van now that we don’t have piles of media stacked from the carpet to the ceiling.

Although I don’t want to totally celebrate our collective addiction to them, I know that everyone in the van having a phone keeps us comfortable, placated, and safe. A 10-hour drive requires a lot of distraction if you’re not driving—especially if it’s your 10th 10-hour drive in as many days.

Obviously, you should try to limit your screen use if possible. When your eye starts twitching at the end of the first week of tour, you can blame it on a number of things: stress, sleepless nights, and screen time. You may have to wait until you’re home again to de-stress and catch up on sleep, but putting down your phone can be done at any time. I mean, in theory. I’ve never done it myself. My eye? Oh, it’s fine. It just always twitches.

**Positivity**  
People who don’t play music for a living have a very fantastical view of what the touring life is actually like. Your friends and family back at home picture it as an extended vacation. You travel to exciting cities every day and party hard every night. What they fail to realize is that you are working the whole time.

Tour is a job unlike any other; it can be fun, but it’s incredibly exhausting. You spend less than 24 hours in each city you visit, and therefore don’t get to see many sights. It’s not very relaxing, and often uncomfortable. Tour can make you depressed, and has even made some people quit music altogether. Negative feelings can creep in quickly when you are living in cramped quarters and constantly sleep-deprived. I think it’s important to remind yourself that you are doing what you love, and that following your dreams is hard work!

Of course, a positive mental attitude doesn’t always come naturally. It is something that has to be cultivated and practiced. On tour, you will find yourself in many tough situations that you cannot command. A wise man once said, “The mark of a pure man is that one realizes he can’t control his circumstances; he can only control his response.” That man was Frasier Crane.

**Wet Ones**  
Let’s face it: we live in a filthy world. Most things we touch are covered in germs. When you’re on the road, you’re often tired and probably not on the best diet. Your body will be extra susceptible to infection, so it’s vital that you do whatever you can to keep your hands and face clean. I’m not a total germaphobe, but I have found that the more I stay clean, the less I am sick on tour. There’s nothing cool about always carrying a stock of Wet Ones in your backpack. But if you’re more concerned with being cool than being healthy, you’re gonna be coughing and sneezing your way through most of tour. And if that ends up happening, please, cover your mouth. 🐞





## The Simplicity of Rock & Roll

**Rhys Chatham had already made a mark on New York’s avant-garde music scene by the age of 20. The precocious composer and instrumentalist had studied with Morton Subotnick, played alongside La Monte Young and Tony Conrad, tuned harpsichords for Glenn Gould, and become the first music director of iconic experimental performance space The Kitchen. But in 1977, at the age of 25, Chatham was inspired by New York’s burgeoning punk scene to compose *Guitar Trio*, a minimal piece scored for electric guitars and drums. *Guitar Trio* represented an important bridge between downtown New York’s fertile avant-garde and punk rock environments; per Chatham himself, it was the moment that he found his voice as a composer.**

**Chatham has spent the ensuing decades expanding the boundaries of rock and art music, culminating most recently in two very different-sounding LPs: the meditative *Pythagorean Dream* and a collaboration with free-rock band Oneida called *What’s Your Sign?* For this issue of AdHoc, Simon Hanes—the leader of Boston-based experimental lounge outfit Tredici Bacci—grilled Chatham on the role of composition and improvisation in his work, and the sometimes very gossamer line between them. Tredici Bacci opens for Chatham, who will be collaborating with Oneida on November 12 in Brooklyn.**

**Simon Hanes: I read an interview of yours where you talk about the relationship between composition and improvisation—about how you see them as existing on a kind of continuum.**

Rhys Chatham: I don’t make any difference between them; they’re just two different approaches to composition. That said, there’s some music that you absolutely have to notate, and there’s some music that would be crazy to notate. “Giant Steps” by John Coltrane could be notated—and it has been transcribed—but it’s much more fun playing over Coltrane changes, and it’s much more interesting for people to do so. Using my own work as an example, *Guitar Trio*, which is played by up to 10 musicians—it would lose something if I notated it. It was a piece that was meant to be played by rock musicians in a rock context. And the whole approach was that I play a rhythm, and people are asked to make a counterpoint to that rhythm that works with the backbeat the drummer is doing.

One time we did a piece for 100 guitars—back in maybe 2005. We did it in Paris at the Sacré-Cœur. (It was for ostensibly 400 guitars, but

we didn’t have that many.) The idea was to just be able to surround the audience with electric guitars. I did it the way I normally did: the guitarists all knew the piece, and I said, “Here, I’m playing this, and you make up your thing.” What happened is, the first time we did it, the sound was really confused. It didn’t sound that good. Later on, I played a concert in Montreal with Godspeed You! Black Emperor. We had a total of 12 guitars on stage, and I noticed that, after 10 guitars, the sound got a little confused.

So I realized that in terms of improvising, my limit is no more than 10 guitars. I made a new piece called *A Secret Rose* recently, which is for 100 electric guitars, plus bass and drums. One of the movements is a version of *Guitar Trio*, but I notated a series of riffs. There were three section leaders, and I had each of them improvise in the sense that each of the section leaders would point to a riff, and then their section of 33 guitars would play it. It was a case where it had to be notated, or else the sound would’ve been confused. A lot of my compositions use elements of improvisation. It’s rare that I play free, although I like free a lot.

**Has your perception of the relationship between composition and improvisation changed since you first started making music?**

It’s funny: the first piece I did was this piece called *Two Gongs* in 1971. There was a prose score for it; I didn’t think of it as improvisation. Obviously, there was a lot of improvisation involved, because the score said to do certain things, but the piece was played differently every time.

My background was as a conservatory musician; I played flute, transverse flute. And around 1973, this guy Frederic Rzewski came into town. In Italy, they had this group called Musica Elettronica Viva. When he came to New York, he started the MEV New York Orchestra. He got all these conservatory friends like Tom Johnson together every week—none of whom had ever improvised in their entire lives, including me—and he mixed it up with his friends coming out of the African-American tradition, like Anthony Braxton and Karl Berger. In the late ’50s and early ’60s, people like Luciano Berio, Stockhausen, Earle Brown, and Cornelius Cardew were trying to break out of the enslavement of fully notated music by doing weird things with notation. Then Cornelius got into graphic notation, and then finally MEV said, “Just throw the notation out—we’re gonna improvise free.”

But there was this whole other tradition of improvisation, namely the tradition of African-American art music, like Don Cherry and Ornette Coleman—totally free. Frederic realized that we were at a point of intersection in 1973, where African-American art music and art music coming out of a conservatory tradition [were converging]. There was a hierarchy back then, where conservatory music was at the top of the pyramid, and conservatory composers considered jazz to be, at best, somewhat underneath it, or, at worst, just opium-inspired diddlings—with no understanding of the hours and hours of training that go into playing two-five-one changes. Frederic did a lot to break down these prejudices. Frederic, on the one side, and Karl Berger and Anthony Braxton and that whole crew, on the other—Oliver Lake and Ornette and Don—were all working to break these barriers down. That’s what we all were thinking about in the early ’70s: “Let’s break these barriers down.”

**You worked tuning pianos and harpsichords pretty early on in your career. That must’ve been the greatest ear-training of all time.**

It was. My father was a harpsichordist, so I grew up in that world of early music, and I apprenticed with a British harpsichord maker living in New York named Hugh Goth, and he eventually sent me to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the Steinway of harpsichord builders is—William Dowd. I worked in Dowd’s workshop and learned how to really tune there, and he sent me back to New York and I became his tuner for all the classical people. That’s where I got into the overtones. You have to hear them in order to tune.

## Legendary minimalist Rhys Chatham discusses composition, improvisation, and the magic of overtones.

My trainer was the foreman of the factory, and he said, “What you have to do is one tuning per day.” So I did a tuning a day, and I would put my ear up really close to the strings; my teacher would just laugh and say, “Rhys, I’m sitting 20 feet away, and I can hear them all the way from here.” After three months I still wasn’t hearing them, and one of the other apprentices said, “Rhys, it’s that way for everyone, but what’s gonna happen one of these days is you’ll realize you’ve been hearing them all along.” I had no idea what to look for, and then I finally did. Because the Western training of hearing fundamental frequency is the pitch, I just hadn’t heard [the frequencies] in the context of the waveform.

**How did being able to hear overtones influence your approach to making music?**

It wasn’t until I started playing rock that I felt I could make a composition that incorporated my background as a harpsichord tuner with the minimalist music that I had adopted with La Monte and Tony Conrad. Because I didn’t wanna be posing, my goal was to play at Max’s Kansas City and CBGB. So I decided to make this composition to be played by rock musicians, with rock instrumentation and in a rock context. We played it at Max’s first, and I was scared to death. But we played and people were going back to the sound bar saying, “Where are you hiding the singers? We’re hearing singers.” It was the overtones.

Overtones are very ethereal, right? If you turn the volume up to 10, you can hear them. And the tunings I was using in *Guitar Trio*—that’s the piece we were playing—reinforced the overtones. And so you heard our discrete rhythms, but with the overtones it made a composite waveform that sounded like choirs of angels. At the time, I didn’t consider myself a rock composer, because I had too much respect for the form. I saw myself as this SoHo guy coming to play in a rock context with rock musicians and making music that was not rock. But by the time I was in my thirties, I had played more in rock halls than I had in concert halls, and so fuck it: I was a rock musician. What I wanted to do when I was at The Kitchen in the late ’70s was break the final frontier, which was rock.

**When did you start playing electric guitar?**

23—no, 24. I started playing guitar the day after I heard the Ramones. A friend took me to see the Ramones, and when I heard them, I realized that up until then I had been doing student work; I hadn’t found my own voice. The pieces I did sounded like Éliane Radigue, La Monte Young, Tony Conrad; I thought those were fine influences to have, but when you’re a trumpet player, you gotta figure out a way to not sound like Miles Davis, you know? Everyone has to find their own voice. I was like, “Okay, what can I do that isn’t a mere copy of my teachers?” When I heard that Ramones concert, I had the answer. But [the Ramones] were obviously doing much more complex music than I was. I was only playing one chord; they were playing three. But it was so repetitive that I felt an affinity with it. I said, “This is my tribe.”

**How did the Oneida collaboration come about?**

My manager Regina Greene called me up and said, “I wanna put you together with this group.” I listened to their stuff, and we met and we had a good time talking together and we got together to play at Secret Project Robot. John [Colpitts, aka Kid Millions, Oneida’s drummer,] was playing free. I thought he was gonna be playing a backbeat, but I was surprised when he didn’t. We had a great time, so I grew suspicious, and I said, “Were you guys doing that just to make it easier for me?” They said, “No! This is how we play.”

Eventually, I felt like I was a member of the group. I think Regina had thought that I would write a composition for them, but it didn’t work out that way at all. We improvised together, and out of the improvisations grew a set of pieces that eventually turned into an album. I think only one of the pieces on that album sounds anything like what one would associate with my music: “The Well-Tuned Guitar”; it’s in just intonation. And then we did this other piece called “The Mabinogian.” That title comes from a Welsh version of the Arthurian romances, which inspired the piece. It was all totally notated, but when we got into the studio, Bobby [Matador, Oneida’s keyboardist,] said, “How about if we fuck it up?” So we put it to heavy, heavy distortion of various kinds—and that’s Oneida. It’s an Oneida piece.

**To what extent would you say *What’s Your Sign?* is inspired by jazz?**

This record relates directly to the trumpet work I was doing at the time of the release of *Outdoor Spell* [2011], which is a trumpet record that I put out. On that record, I was working with [drummer] Kevin Shea and a wonderful French improviser named Jean-Marc Montera, who’s a really cool free player. I wasn’t even working from prose scores; it was just my usual compositional method of working, where I do a run-through, record it, and then listen to the parts that work and don’t work. As in, if it’s two minor seven, I’ll play this; if it’s a five seven, I’ll play that.

The work I did with Oneida is not that. What we’re doing is coming out of free playing, but it’s not that, because we turn the results of our free improvisations into compositions. All of the pieces except two came out of our jams together, and then we talked about making pieces out of the jams, and now we do those pieces and they sound more or less the same every time we play them. The bottom line: you meet a group of musicians, and the first way you know how to interact with each other is by improvising, and then out of that comes the composition, because you took it all and cut it down into its most badass moments.

[When you’re improvising], you also learn a lot about people, about where they’re at. Are they gonna be polite? Are they gonna jump in when they need to jump in? It’s like that line in the *Matrix* series: “You don’t know someone until you fight them.” ☺



How Summer Camp Prepared Me for Life as a Touring Musician

On tour, I think about this Neko Case quote almost daily: “Playing in an independent rock band will eventually make you equal parts truck driver, gladiator, and mule. Glamour is for those with trust funds.”

Touring requires a unique type of emotional and physical resilience. You live in extreme closeness almost 24/7 with your bandmates. There is a tight daily schedule, and all your belongings are in one suitcase. Often, there's bad food and poor sleep, but you are compensated with late-night confessional conversations, adrenaline rushes, and a lexicon of inside jokes. There's a rare type of bonding that occurs where your group begins to feel like a musical misfit family. The worst-case scenario is that you return home thinking, “I will NEVER do that again.” The best-case scenario is that you come home with a handful of cherished new friends, a head full of experiences, and a clearer sense of who you are.

You know what else that sounds like? Summer camp.

From ages 10 to 15, I spent one to two months every summer at a camp in northern Minnesota. My bunkmates and I shared cabins without electricity and bathed in a lake using biodegradable soap.

The year after my last summer at camp, my first band, the Hush Sound, got signed. I began touring soon after, so much of my life has felt like a continuum of strange adventures that fall somewhere between *Salute Your Shorts* and VH1’s *Behind the Music*. Here are a few examples of ways camp prepared me for life as a touring musician.



Here is the lake we bathed in at Camp Mishawaka.

Greta Morgan, aka Springtime Carnivore, on sleeping in weird places, leeches, and rejection.

Sleeping in Strange Places

Age 12, Camp Mishawaka

I slept under a canoe in the rain. I slept on the deck of a small sailboat for a few nights. I camped in the woods. Mostly, though, I slept in a bunk in a cabin without air conditioning while being gnawed on by Midwestern mosquitos. Most nights, I'd listen to Wilco's song "Sunken Treasure" (*Being There*, 1996) on repeat on my Walkman before bed.

Ages 15 through 28, on tour

I slept on a tour bus on which our German driver blasted Rammstein at all hours. I slept on Ford E350 passenger van benches and floors. I occasionally took naps in my keyboard case, which is just large enough to fit my frame and only sort of felt like a coffin. Sometimes, I slept in budget hotels or the homes of generous friends and family.

The worst hotel I ever stayed in was in Odessa, Texas. It had curtains on the walls, but no windows behind them. We tried to draw the curtains back and saw that the room was just a concrete box. There was a piece of someone else's dirty laundry on the floor when we arrived, but we were too exhausted to move to a different hotel. When we turned off the lights, there was a ceiling full of glow-in-the-dark stars. The next day, I discovered a half-dozen cockroaches hiding behind the bath towels. I still often listened to Wilco's "Sunken Treasure" before bed.

Dealing with Critters

Age 11, Camp Mishawaka

I stepped out of the lake after an afternoon swim and discovered a large leech sucking on my ankle. There are two ways to remove a leech: you can shake salt onto it so that it shrivels up, or just rip the sucker off. I tried the second method, only to discover that there were a bunch of baby leeches beneath it. Someone ran to the dining hall for a saltshaker and we "assalted" those bad boys until they shriveled up and moved into their next lives.

Age 20, the Hush Sound's summer headlining tour

I had been itchy for a few weeks on this tour, but figured it was nerves and the heat. On a day off in Redding, California, I was blissed-out and relaxing by a river when I scratched my head and saw tiny monsters beneath my fingernails. I had lice for the first time in my life. I bought lice shampoo, cut off 10 inches of my hair, and despondently combed the bugs out while watching a *Law and Order SVU* marathon in our Best Western day room.

Since the boys miraculously didn't get lice, it was my responsibility to delouse our tour bus. I spent the night sterilizing sheets, clothes, and other fabrics from the bus in a trucker laundromat and fell asleep, exhausted, in a trucker movie theater at 5AM. I woke up next to a toothless man when he erupted in laughter at a joke in the TV show *Wings*.

Coping with Rejection

Age 12, Camp Mishawaka

I made a friendship bracelet for my number-one camp crush and wrote him a letter saying, "Dear David, I like you. If you like me back, wear this to breakfast at the dining hall tomorrow so that I see it and know we feel the same." Guess who was NOT wearing the bracelet at breakfast.

One of his friends brought me the envelope with the bracelet still inside and a note that said, "Sorry, Greta. I just want to be friends."

I didn't make eye contact with David in the dining hall or at dances for the rest of the summer.

Age 19, in Chicago, Illinois

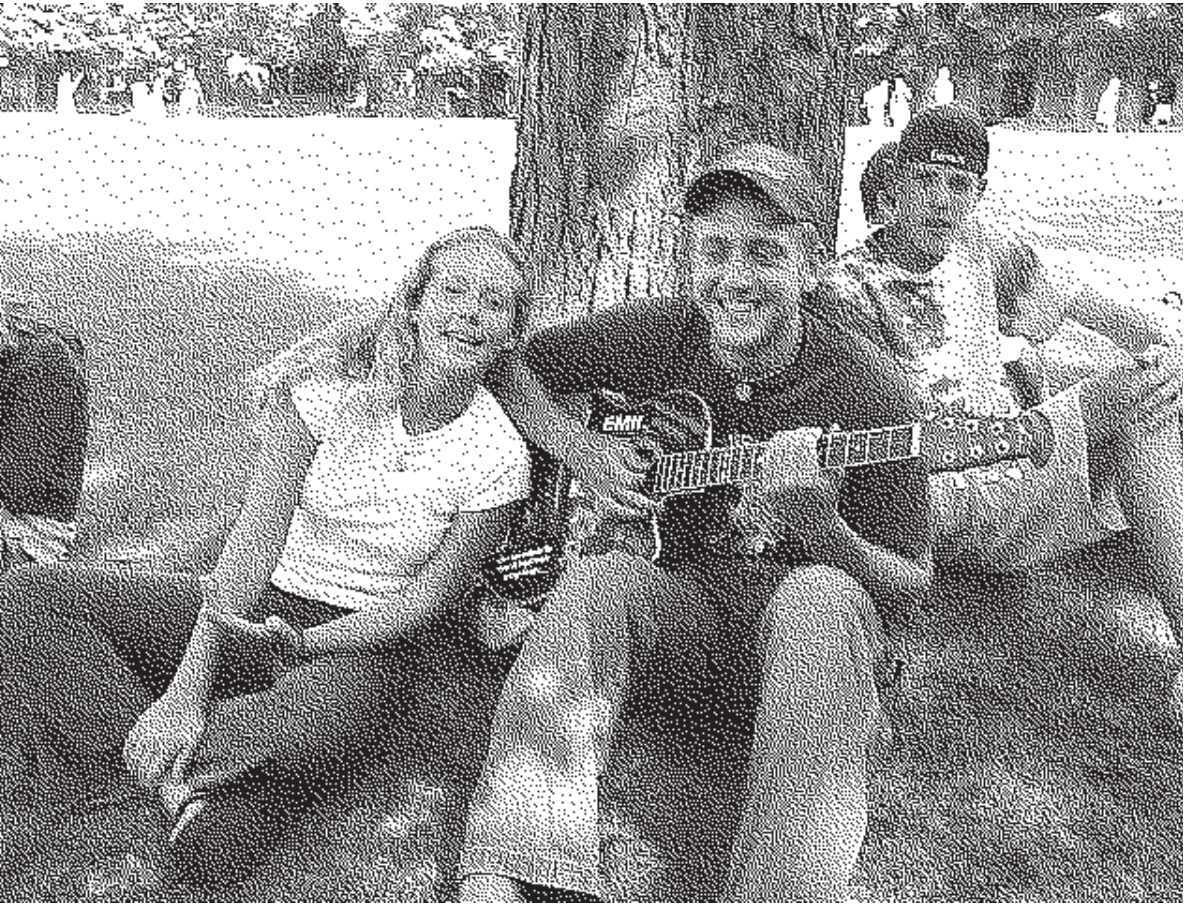
My band, the Hush Sound, received our first heartbreakingly negative review on our record, *Goodbye Blues*, which I'd poured my whole heart into. The writer isolated all the weaknesses that I was insecure about, and it resonated with me as an accurate statement. It was brutal for my 19-year-old self, as I'd not yet grown thick skin. I felt ashamed of the record I'd worked so hard on, and questioned whether I should continue playing music. We had a show that night and the writer's words were haunting me. While performing the songs, I felt my throat tighten because I wanted to cry. I had a hard time singing and felt embarrassed afterward.

Despite the challenges, touring is one of my greatest joys. I feel driven to do it. I was built for it in certain ways, like how I find the hum of an engine to be a soothing lullaby, or how I'm comforted by the minimalism of packing only one suitcase. I love the shape of travel-sized bottles of shampoo and conditioner and airplane-sized liquor bottles. I love the camaraderie of being with my bandmates. I love playing shows. I love seeing new cities. I love the long hours for thinking, reading, and reflection in the van.

I love how touring creates chapters of time with clear beginnings and endings. It feels like dividing the actual seasons into smaller seasons and gives me a way to measure my life and creative path.

This quote from writer Lin Yutang has also always rung true to me: "No one realizes how beautiful it is to travel until he comes home and rests his head on his old, familiar pillow."

I'm about to head out with La Sera to play the new Springtime Carnivore record, *Midnight Room*, which came out this fall. Wish me luck—and let's all keep our fingers crossed for no leeches this time around. 🐸



That guy is my friend Daniel, who taught me my first song ever on guitar. It was "Eye of the Tiger," closely followed by an Alkaline Trio guitar riff.



# Upcoming AdHoc Events

NOVEMBER	
11/01	Trash Talk, Antwon, Black Noise @ Brooklyn Bazaar
11/02	Silver Apples, Forma, Bernardino Femminielli @ Good Room
11/02	TEEN, Ex Reyes @ The Footlight
11/02	Låpsley, Aquilo @ Webster Hall
11/03	Aurora, Dan Croll @ Webster Hall
11/03	Sorority Noise, Free Throw, Ratboys @ Shea Stadium
11/03	Ryley Walker, Circuit des Yeux @ Villain
11/03	Porches @ Warsaw
11/04	Honus Honus, Pink Mexico @ Alphaville
11/04	Wrekmeister Harmonies, Kayo Dot, Miserable @ Trans-Pecos
11/05	Screaming Females, Moor Mother @ Villain
11/05	Crying, Radiator Hospital, Foozle, Long Beard @ Shea Stadium
11/05	A Night Of UK Grime with D Double E & Faze Miyake @ Slake
11/10	Moist Robot, Natural Child, Savoy Motel, @ The Studio at Webster Hall
11/10	Digable Planets, DJ Earl @ Webster Hall
11/11	Forth Wanderers, Vundabar, Yours Are The Only Ears @ Shea Stadium
11/11	El Perro Del Mar, Evy Jane @ Baby’s All Right
11/11	The Thermals, Heliotropes, Superweeks @ Brooklyn Bazaar
11/12	The Thermals, Tweens, Yucky Duster @ Brooklyn Night Bazaar
11/12	Rhys Chatham & Oneida, Tredici Bacci, Amirtha Kidambi Elder Ones @ Park Church Co-op
11/12	Haybaby, Leapling, Holy Tunics, Fern Mayo @ Shea Stadium
11/12	Fight Amp, HAAN, Fashion Week @ Sunnyvale
11/12	Body/Head @ National Sawdust
11/13	Frankie Cosmos, Big Thief, Vagabon @ Webster Hall
11/15	True Widow, Mary Lattimore @ Villain
11/16	Nicolas Jaar @ Webster Hall
11/17	Gaika @ Baby’s All Right
11/17	Nicolas Jaar @ Webster Hall
11/18	Sheer Mag @ Brooklyn Night Bazaar
11/18	Xylouris White, Marisa Anderson @ National Sawdust
11/18	Jess Williamson, Mega Bog, Buck Meek @ The Footlight Bar
11/18	Nicolas Jaar @ Webster Hall

11/18	Jeff Rosenstock, Hard Girls, Katie Ellen @ Villain
11/18	Sheer Mag, Kaleidoscope @ Brooklyn Night Bazaar
11/20	Pile, Guerilla Toss, Jackal Onasis @ Villain
11/20	Fear of Men, Weaves, Yohuna @ Baby’s All Right
11/21	Mitski, Fear of Men @ Webster Hall
11/21	Nobunny, Future Punx, Big Huge @ Shea Stadium
11/22	Mitski, Nick Hakim, Mal Devisa @ Villain
11/23	Slaughter Beach, Dog, Abi Reimold @ Shea Stadium
11/25	A\$AP Ferg, Playboi Carti, Rob \$tone @ Webster Hall

DECEMBER	
12/02	Bellows, Painted Zeros, Hello Shark, CARE @ Shea Stadium
12/07	Helen Money, Psalm Zero, Bambara @ Trans-Pecos
12/09	Twin Peaks, together PANGEA @ Webster Hall
12/09	Foodman, DJ Fulltono @ Sunnyvale
12/10	The Mystery Lights, Warbly Jets @ Shea Stadium
12/10	Islands performing <i>Return to the Sea</i> @ Webster Hall
12/10	Queer Trash IV w/ A Week of Kindness, Tissa Mawartyassari, SERPENTINE, The New York Review of Cocksucking @ Alphaville
12/10	Parquet Courts, X_____x, Flasher, Special Guests @ Knockdown Center
12/13	Sad13, Emily Reo @ Baby's All Right
12/14	Honduras, Navy Gangs @ Baby’s All Right
12/14	Something In The Way 2016 w/ Basement, Citizen, Turnover @ Webster Hall
12/16	Japanese Breakfast (solo) + Eskimeaux (solo) @ Shea Stadium
12/16	Old Gray, Nine of Swords, Soul Glo, Closer @ Shea Stadium

JANUARY	
01/05	Title Fight, GIVE, Westpoint @ Knockdown Center
01/18	Muuy Biiën @ Shea Stadium
01/20	Creepoid @ Sunnyvale
01/27	Adam Ant @ Webster Hall
01/28	Priests @ Brooklyn Night Bazaar

FEBRUARY	
02/01	Cloud Nothings @ Webster Hall
02/17	Lemuria, Mikey Erg @ Brooklyn Night Bazaar